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RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 3552  
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON 8390  
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE 3410  
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN 4570  
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 2685  
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STATE FOR WHA/CAR RCBUDDEN, INR/B

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/28/2016

TAGS: PREL PHUM PINR UNGA BF

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER AND AMBASSADOR REVIEW RELATIONS,  
MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Brent Hardt for reasons 1.4(b) a  
nd (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During a frank discussion in a one-on-one meeting with the Ambassador, Prime Minister Christie expressed surprise at the Bahamian voting record in the U.N. and limited multilateral cooperation with the U.S. at the UN.

The Prime Minister and Ambassador agreed that bilateral cooperation was outstanding across the board. Christie indicated he may take a more direct role in future foreign policy decisions, and the FM subsequently told us Christie has requested an analysis of Bahamian voting at the UN. END SUMMARY.

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Promoting Closer Cooperation in the UN  
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¶2. (C) On August 24, Ambassador Rood met with Prime Minister Perry Christie on the occasion of Christie's birthday. During the meeting, Ambassador Rood expressed appreciation for the outstanding partnerships between The Bahamas and the United States, praising the US-Bahamian bilateral relationship. Ambassador Rood noted, however, his concern that our shared values were not always reflected in common approaches to international problems in the United Nations, where the Department's most recent UN Voting Patterns report noted that the Bahamas ranks 29th of 33 countries in the Western Hemisphere on important votes to the U.S. Reminding Christie of his government's past advocacy against apartheid, the Ambassador encouraged Christie to use The Bahamas' UN vote to stand up for its own values and democratic principles elsewhere in the world. The Ambassador suggested that the declining UN compatibility figures highlighted a need for closer dialogue on these issues between The Bahamas and the United States.

¶3. (C) In response to the Ambassador's concerns, Christie distanced himself from Minister Mitchell's handling of Bahamian policy, saying "foreign policy is driven by Fred (Mitchell) and the MFA, without involvement of my office." Christie, who expressed surprise that The Bahamas was less in agreement with the U.S. than Barbados and Jamaica, conveyed genuine disappointment with Mitchell's handling of these U.N. issues. He said he would consider greater involvement in foreign policy decisions and suggested that he may ask for key international human rights votes to come before Cabinet for consideration. Mitchell subsequently told the Ambassador

that Christie had requested an analysis of the Bahamas' recent UN votes.

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OPBAT; FAA Issues  
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14. (U) Ambassador provided the Prime Minister with continued assurances of the U.S. commitment to the OPBAT program, noting that there had been a spate of high level visits to assess the operation. Officials had come away reinforced with the importance of the operation, and appreciative of the close cooperation we have with Bahamian law enforcement. Christie reiterated the importance to The Bahamas of OPBAT, and said he would draft a letter to President Bush or Secretary Rice on the matter.

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15. (U) Ambassador Rood raised a pending proposal by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to provide flight information services as part of The Bahamas request for a Bahamas Flight Information Region (BFIR). Christie agreed to personally review the FAA proposal regarding BFIR. The Ambassador emphasized the importance to the U.S. of ensuring smooth control over air traffic in the Bahamas/Miami air corridor. NOTE: The GCOB received the proposal from the FAA in March 2006. END NOTE.

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Addressing Misperceptions of the U.S.  
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16. (C) Ambassador Rood relayed to the Prime Minister his concern about the anti-U.S. viewpoints conveyed in the "Bahamas Uncensored" web site formerly administered by Fred Mitchell and which is seen by the Bahamian public and media as still largely under his editorial control. Christie said he doubted Mitchell was still directly involved in the site, but acknowledged that the perception of his continued involvement could contribute to perceptions of problems in the bilateral relationship. NOTE: The web site is written in Mitchell's rhetorical style with MFA inside information and knowledge that no journalist would have access to. END NOTE.

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COMMENT  
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17. (C) Christie was responsive to concerns raised and appeared genuinely concerned about the lack of Bahamian support for human rights resolutions on Burma, Iran, Sudan and others. Our public diplomacy on these issues has generated a public dialogue in the media and a private dialogue within the MFA on the wisdom of following the CARICOM line of not voting on country-specific resolutions. Mitchell remains wedded to the NAM/G-77 orientation on these matters and sees his role as keeping the Bahamas out of any and all international controversies. He has also indicated that he would like to keep foreign policy matters out of the public domain to avoid domestic controversies as elections approach. Christie's consideration of a more direct role in foreign policy matters is, however, an encouraging sign. With elections approaching, both parties want to be seen as having close ties to the U.S., which is the lifeline for most Bahamians. END COMMENT.

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